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Walter Dickson

[redacted]

with the author's

Compts. & kind regards

SIR ABERDOUR; OR, THE SCEPTIC.

SIR ABERDOUR;

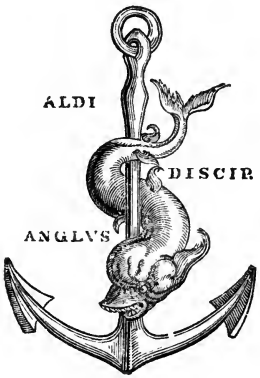
OR, THE SCEPTIC.

A ROMAUNT.

BY

WALTER P. J. PURCELL, Esq.

OF THE INNER TEMPLE.



LONDON:

BASIL MONTAGU PICKERING,

196, PICCADILLY.

1863.

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TO

LIEUT. FREDERICK WILBRAHAM EGERTON,

ROYAL NAVY.

My dear Egerton,

IN agreeable remembrance of the happy days which we spent together in a remote latitude—in a region where Nature's smiles are hollowest, and man's finer feelings soonest blunted, and where, but for the call of duty and the voice of friendship, the page of life would be either blank or filled with manifold discomforts, —I inscribe to you these stanzas, the birth of which you witnessed, and upon the growth of which you loved to smile.

Your sincere friend,

Walter Purcell.

Civil and United Service Club,
Jersey, Nov. 22nd, 1862.

" Parole mie, che per lo monde siete,

. . . . . .

Quando trovate donne di valore,
Gittatevile a piedi umilemente,
Dicendo : a voi dovem noi fare onore."—Dante.

" My mystic rhymes, wide-wandering through the world,

. . . . . .

When ladies of true worth ye chance to find,
Fall at their feet with all humility,
Saying : our duty is to do you honour."

Sir C. Lyell's *Translation.*

II.

" If I am lonely, so was Richter too,[1]
And yet she came at last—the perfect one,
Uniting mind to beauty, and as true
As promise of the next bright summer's sun.
This want of love should not that want of tone
Induce in all my actions, which doth look
As though my spirit were subdued or gone,
And I a ruin—I, who would not brook
Heaven's interference here, nor man's nor God's
rebuke,—

III.

" A ruin, like a crumbling pile of stone
Dismantled by a storm when earthquakes fail'd.
Hail, solitude! I like to be alone;
I am not grieved that I have not prevail'd,
For what had beauty, grace, and wit avail'd,
And she, worshipp'd of me, a worshipper,
By her absorbing deity impaled,
And thinking less of me than I of her;—
I am not grieved; no, I am a philosopher!

IV.

" Maud was a perfect being but for this,
And but for this we never would have parted;
I loved her as my only source of bliss,
Ere bliss seem'd false and woman hollow-hearted.
Whate'er design I fondly form is thwarted,
I my own instrument of wrong; the flower
That brightest seems, which has its sweets imparted
We pluck, forgetting it will droop that hour;
Each pleasure hath its sting, and this 'sweet world'
is sour.

V.

" As Maud was gentle I regret her loss,
As she was artless I do grieve the more,
As she so loved me I could almost gloss
Her failing o'er—nay, I could gloss it o'er,—
She *God* adored as *Nature* I adore ;
But we are sever'd now, I cannot sigh
Child-like in silence, nor will I implore;
As I would fling a faded floweret by
So cast I her aside; hail, my philosophy!"

VI.

Who is this man that lispeth thus alone
Upon the bay of Naples and at night,
Looking as though the waters were his own,
And fawning on him was the pale moonlight?
He brooded o'er the wreck of visions bright,—
Visions which love had raised and pride did mar;
A sceptic he believed himself, polite,
Accomplish'd, learned, in opinions' war
Rude and tyrannical, as learned sceptics are.

VII.

Bold in ideas, eager to express,
He had th' Omnipotent dethroned, and named
The earth, his heaven, to be a wilderness.
A star o'er his horizon rose which claim'd
His adoration; but, his mind inflamed,
He strangely minister'd;—to his drear world
Love would not stoop; he argued, frown'd, and blamed:
Like Day's proud glories in the evening furl'd,
Love's star declined, and clouds again around him whirl'd.

VIII.

Distemper'd minds seek in a change of scene
What sick men do in physic, with success
Alike proportion'd; there are ills as keen
Of mind as body, when bright scenes, no less
Than the physician's skill, seem worthlessness.
Italian skies, warm as the blush of love,
Italian meads, fragrant as love's caress,
Wherein, as in their garden, nations rove,
For some no joy can bring, no sorrow can remove.

IX.

Sir Aberdour—our hero's name—was young,
And seem'd with a Byronic tinge imbued;
He wasted day the proud and fair among,
To laugh at them at night in solitude;
Not man, not nature, but himself had strew'd
His path with thorns; yet so perverse was he,
The world he view'd, in silent angry mood,
As hostile, gross,—his traitor enemy:
If men cry "wrongs," like "ghosts," wrongs they expect to see.

X.

Man hated he, and woman he despised,
But often own'd he woman's influence;
He had a fair ideal 'twas surmised,
'Tis certain he did woo on such pretence;
No woman without fault; some wit, some sense,
Some moral courage wanted, each was spurn'd
As though each had betray'd his confidence;
Despairing of success at length he urn'd
His sacred flame, and burn'd like others, wildly burn'd.

XI.

Now he had been in Naples just six weeks,
And what he styled his proud philosophy—
Indifference merely—soon was lost in freaks,
A few of which we'll mention by-and-bye.
His nights no longer pass'd he musingly
Upon the moon-lit waters, and no more
For Maud and home enjoyments did he sigh;
He lived upon excitement, acting o'er
Life's spicy scenes, such as described by *Little* Moore.

XII.

'Twas night, and in a noble's rich saloons
Was held a revel or new style of ball;
Flowers everywhere were hung in gay festoons,
Arm'd Cupids were seen springing from the wall,
It seem'd as if Cotytto's festival [2]
Was there revived,—the women look'd so bare,
The men so jolly, and so phrenzied all;
They all wore masks, which ill conceal'd the fair;
I blush to say there were two English ladies there.[3]

XIII.

They danced in couples; when the dance was o'er
Each couple stray'd into embower'd seats;
Then talk'd and sigh'd and smiled they as before:
And reason, as the wine flows in, retreats.
A *shepherdess*, with *swain* emerging, meets
A *German student*, who, intent on strife,
Bows, lifts his arms, and with loud kisses greets;
The masks fall off, the lady prays for life,—
The *student*, English now, "My wife," cries, "Gods,
my wife!"

XIV.

The *swain*, at first indignant, calmly gazed
On the sad scene till he had caught the eye
Of Lord A.'s *gipsy girl*, whose mask he raised
With one or two words of apology;—
"By Jove," he roar'd, " a victim too am I!"
So play'd those English gentlemen their parts,
Betray'd they each the other seemingly,—
To gain divorce; they cared not what vile arts
They practised on their wives,—the world denied
them hearts.

XV.

A certain Count St. Julian gave that fête
His English friends to suit; they would as much
To please the count, but that sad reprobate
Deem'd it a most unholy thing to clutch
Two living wives; however, things were such
When he invited Aberdour, he fail'd
On the expected *dénouement* to touch:
This saves our hero from the shame entail'd,
For I must doubt he could poor wives have so assail'd.

XVI.

" O woman," cried he, as at early morn
He left St. Julian's sadden'd by that place;
" Poor woman! though the brightest creature born,
The vilest still thy beauties can deface.
Where are thy charms to shield thee from disgrace
When link'd to perjured man? Where is thy might
When an intriguing mother plays thee base?
And where thy courage when gleams in thy sight
A coronet or wealth? Dimm'd, woman, is thy light!

XVII.

" They treat thee now, whilst lasts thy sun's eclipse,
As dogs of old were treated in Peru
During eclipses of the moon, with whips[4]—
Of scandal, scorn, indifference, and you
Strong in your weakness, to yourself not true!
One maiden could a low vile spot on earth
Endear to Dante,[5] so my Maud can do
For her whole race, though gone is part her worth:
Woman, love half redeems and throws a halo round thy birth.

XVIII.

" Thy place near man is in his shade always,
Not for the glare are thy soft beauties made;
Most plants may bloom where the free sunshine plays,
But some will flourish only in the shade.[6]
To yield thee his protection, not upbraid
For thy dependence—an endearing charm—
Is man's first duty, which, too long delay'd,
The garish world thy lovely tints may harm,
And so may droop earth's fairest flower,—too cold,—too warm.

XIX.

" Thou injured art if man his smiles withhold,
And ruin'd, if bestow'd, he them withdraw;
Trust not thy charms, too like a tale untold;
Esteem alone can fix love's changing law.
The slave or minion triumphs with *éclat*,
Till sameness gives satiety; with wit
Is woman something more than a gewgaw:
The seasons roll, each for enjoyment fit—
A woman's phases may or not seem exquisite !"

XX.

The noble Count, though he affected much,
Effected little that can be commended;
He loved the wassail bowl, high play, and such,
And once a week his way to mass he wended:
I cannot say what thoughts in church were blended,
But 'twas observed, as quite a common thing,
When his devotions and the service ended,
He straightway sought some festive gathering,
As if new zest for vice was found in worshipping.

XXI.

A polish'd hypocrite like Jean de Paull,
Pray'd he upon the highways,—ever civil;
Because his uncle was a cardinal,
He play'd the saint to safer act the devil,
But harm'd none save himself by all his evil:
A fool in wisdom's garb at morn, at night
A fool confest disporting at a revel;
With fortune toy'd he till the luckless wight
Found friends and fortune gone, himself a Timonite.

XXII.

But one or two months after his strange treat
He sought our hero, sad and penniless:
Here he with sympathy was sure to meet,
Not with revilings at his own distress
With which false friends assuage such bitterness.
Sir Aberdour gave what advice he could,
And gold,—a noble heart could do no less;
And such was poor St. Julian's gratitude,
He grasp'd our hero's hands, and thanking, sobbing, stood.

XXIII.

The fount of virtue is not yet quite dry,
If tears acknowledge guilt's mistaken creed;
There's still a spark of generosity
In the sear'd heart, if on the brow we read
Emotions kindled by a generous deed.
The Count regretted errors past; sincere
Indeed he seem'd, so Aberdour decreed
His friend should have two hundred pounds a-year:
Though oft he smiled on vice, he still held virtue dear.

XXIV.

It happen'd at this time a maid there came
From merry England, rich and beautiful;
As scandal had been busy with her name,
And science' representative too dull,
Who wrong affirm'd she was "too loveable,"[7]
The court expell'd her from its train; her home
Was interdicted till the storm should lull:
Here, with a few attendants, she had come,
To die in secret, like a vestal of old Rome.

XXV.

Poor Lady Flora! how her pure young heart
Must have revolted at that imaged crime;
How crush'd her spirit, when she, on the part
Of her accusers, heard her mother's chime.
Oh! that she could annihilate all time—
So wreck'd her mind, her anguish so intense:
She shall not live long in a foreign clime,
With nought to cheer her but her innocence,
And the bright hope in heaven of future recompense.

XXVI.

Ill tidings spread like germs of noxious plants
Which visit every spot to spring anew,
And, like the praise of fawning sycophants,
Can gull the many to disgust the few.
Soon as the English folk at Naples knew
Of Lady F.'s arrival, they had known
Of her imputed crime, which most thought true:
But Aberdour, who had in childhood grown
Beside that gentle girl, believed injustice shown.

XXVII.

He did not visit her, but wrote instead,
And the doom'd girl put on a dying smile
That one was found who had not credited
The base report; one of her own dear Isle:
She little reck'd how foreign tongues defile;
But foreign tongues, in mouths of foreign lords,
Praised high her beauty, and reveal'd the guile
That actuates where there are high rewards:
Alas! what humbling lessons human life affords!

XXVIII.

All honour to St. Julian! he was not
Among those noble suitors who there strove
As though their love or honour could be bought—
Their honour prostrate lay before their love—
Not of the maiden, but her dowry of:
He well concerted with his bounteous friend,
Whose friendship for the dying girl did prove
How much one proud unselfish heart can tend
To gladden life's beginning, and beguile its end.

XXIX.

Now there are sounds of mirth and minstrelsy,
And are assembled in the festive hall,
The proudest of haught Naples' chivalry;
One seat is vacant,—how they wonder all!
Where stays the master of the festival?
Lo! he re-enters, bringing in his train
Nine fair Barbagian girls;[8] most magical
Their glances are in eddying each brain:
A pause, and all as joyously goes on again.

XXX.

Cease melody, and dam mirth's current up;
Look awed, ye lackeys; hush'd be all strange sounds:
An English lord doth come this way to sup;
Make clear the path,—here comes the Marquis! Zounds!
A sleek church-beadle![9] How his robe confounds
The taste of those fastidious foreigners!
The greeting o'er dull compliment abounds;
And Aberdour, the pseudo-Marquis, errs
In not once smiling on the painted sepulchres.

XXXI.

At signal from the host, a blaze of light
Flash'd from a dozen mirrors then reveal'd;
At the same moment rose our English knight,
And, in the name of chivalry, appeal'd
To each true gentleman, if rank should shield
Dishonour rampant round a woman's heart.
He challeng'd to stand forth, or there to yield
Their names to reprobation, those whose art
Was vile dissemblance,—those who play'd the coward's part.

XXXII.

Few understood him; of that few he spoke,
And at them cast a fierce accusing glance:
He stood not there like men in party's yoke,
Who bully China and succumb to France;[10]
"Mild with the weak, but on the strong advance,"
Was the proud dictate which he well obey'd;
In their own stronghold he would break a lance
With false and haughty knights, and have essay'd
All that one heart and arm could in fair woman's aid.

XXXIII.

None answer'd his appeal, and none did stare
More than the culprits, which enraged the more;
He dared—what would an Englishman not dare
When wroth with tyrants he despised of yore?—
To hurl defiance at them all, and o'er
The world proclaim what puling babes such are.
Darken the mirrors, ominous be the hour;
And now, St. Julian, having served thus far
By playing host, let not your outraged feelings war.

XXXIV.

"Here cast I off my gorgeous robe of state,
Here trample on my princely coronet,
Here break my wand of office. Just as great
As when I wore those baubles am I yet!
Ye worship outward forms, as children set
Their hearts on tinsell'd nothings; and do ye
Move to and fro like pompous estafette,
Enslaving others and yourselves not free.
Ye have not e'en a nation: look at Italy!

XXXV.

"Hush, not a murmur! I will make you blush
With shame, as do these girls with shamelessness;
And ye shall quake like despots at the rush
Of banded subjects to enforce redress.
Ye have no nation, say I, and still less
Ye have no nationality save this,—
A love of pomp, and utter listlessness.
Sunk as a people are ye in the abyss
Of social thraldom and unrighteous prejudice.

XXXVI.

" United in religion and in tongue,
Yet are Italians strangers through the land;
The elements of greatness them among
Are scatter'd by a fierce, despotic hand,
To coalesce not whilst here burns the brand
Which disunites the government of things.
They glory in their country! 'Tis a grand
And lovely Eden, portion'd amongst kings,
The nobles keepers, and the people underlings!

XXXVII.

" Pray stay, and be not irate; I would teach
How slaves, by nature noble, may be free:
But hear me yet a little, and my speech
I'll shape to please, or I'll talk history,
And mark what must your own reflections be.
Lopp'd from the Western Empire at its fall.
Bold Odoacer ruled o'er Italy:
The Goths invaded, and the people all
Cried 'Mercy!' thinking they were supernatural.

XXXVIII.

" With Totila expired the Gothic sway,
And, through an exarch at Ravenna ruled
The Greek, till, breaking images one day,
Those the most orthodox took umbrage, school'd
Their fellows, and the flaunting Greek down pull'd.
The Lombards had come through the Alpine pass,
Left undefended,—how the exarchs fool'd!
And to protect from them the Pope said mass,
But also thank'd the Franks to lend their aid in case.—

XXXIX.

" The Pope gave unto Pepin, he to him,
And thus commenced those mutual kindnesses
Which pick'd to pieces the one diadem,
And Italy convulsed with wantonness.
I will not recapitulate with stress
The wars of faction; let the severance
Which has resulted, as you see, express
What this fair land has suffer'd in its trance,
And how well loved should be small kingly cormorants.

XL.

" There is one feature in the scene left out
Which I would mention as encouraging,
Like episode in some wild tale, about
Fierce Eastern ghouls where flaps a fairy's wing:
When swept the cohorts of the Hunnite king
Like clouds of locusts, making night of day,
There was a quick and silent gathering
Of few stout hearts, and well preferr'd they
To fly with freedom, than with slavery to stay.

XLI.

" The Adriatic offer'd its lagoons,
And thither hasten'd the heroic few;
There Venice rose, and with its rise attunes
Revived Italian glory: how it threw
Commotion's waves off, as if there it grew
Like coral isle rejecting stormy seas;
Its people thrived such as few nations do:
Like Raleigh's unsubdued Warraws in trees,[11]
They lived upon the waters, fann'd by freedom's
breeze.

XLII.

"Ah! you look pleased! and I well pleased am too!
Now that you smile I long to make the tears
Gush forth for shame, which I at once can do.
Be not alarm'd, good sirs; dispel those fears;
I will not deal in magic, but in sneers;
The earth doth shake,—just fancy that you feel
A rocking motion; that your eyes and ears
Are keenly sensitive, and much reveal
Which you dare not disclose and yet cannot conceal.

XLIII.

"I see it all! I hear their piercing cries!
The earth did shake, and shake as if it meant
To heave man off with all his infamies;
And from amidst the ravage now is sent
One universal cry for succour, blent
With dying groans and prayers address'd to Heaven:
Lo! Heaven sends to remit their punishment;
The peasantry rush to the towns: they even
Vie in the race to give what aid that can be given.

XLIV.

" What film is o'er my eyes? what spell's at work?
If these be angels, they are fallen ones:—see,
They plunder, riot—not as would the Turk
In a sack'd city.[12] Oh! what devilry!
The dead and dying—no, not they are free
From robbing hands: in vain poor palsied age
Is suppliant; in vain doth infancy,
Appealing from a mother's looks, engage
Those scowling, impish men, relentless in their rage!

XLV.

" That shriek? 'tis from a virtuous girl! See there,
The hellish beast hath caught her in his arms;
Earth gape awide and swallow up the pair,
Life without honour hath for her no charms.
Ay, strike, infuriate girl! He frowns, he storms:
Strike, strike again, thy bodkin wounds his neck;
Thank Heaven, he slays her and himself disarms,
And virtue smiles to consecrate the wreck
Of beauty's form, crush'd ere the touch of guilt could speck!

XLVI.

"Would those Calabrian scenes have e'er occurr'd
If the Calabrian peasants were not slaves?
Pelf is their only talismanic word,
And look they too askant beyond their graves.
From re-enactment of such scenes what saves
Ev'n Naples? Ha! I feel an earthquake's shock;
Where shall you find the shelter pity craves?
True, there it is again! doth Heaven us mock?
Ay, tremble; the Calabrian fiends here may flock!

XLVII.

"What! metamorphosed into men, ye girls,—
Yea, into demons? Ha, ha, ha! brave lords,
Look not so ludicrous and so like churls;
Most bravely done to draw your trusty swords,
And—lose them. Ha, ha, ha! bind ye with cords!
The fiends I do think mean insult now;
Avaunt, ye slaves! know that in deeds or words
An insult couch'd, resentment on the brow
Of those who witness, as of those who bear, should
show."

XLVIII.

Next day mercurial rumour roam'd about;
In no two places was its tale the same,—
"The English lord amused himself, no doubt,
As madmen will." "To frighten and thus shame
Our nobles, meant he; he so hates our name."
"They had, they say, with real imps to cope;
No wonder, then, the Englishman should blame
Our Holy Church; he talk'd of freedom, hope,
Which clearly meant he wanted to o'erthrow the Pope."

XLIX.

But notwithstanding all this talk and noise,
None sought our hero save one Aldobrandi,
Who thought himself sufficient counterpoise
For half the world, if half he hated,—and he
But thought like any other well-bred dandy.
With him was honour no mere bagatelle,
And words, when he could act, he would not bandy:
He claim'd descent—the rest was very well—
From that famed Tegghiaio whom great Dante sent to hell.

L.

Famed Tegghiaio Aldobrandi left a name
Renown'd in war and great in politics;[13]
But he had vices which the blush of shame
Should cause to mantle in his offspring's cheeks.
The boast of ancestry but little speaks
When great and small descend from small and great;
However, it doth fill the world with tricks:
Young Aldobrandi, of no great estate,
And but a boy, seem'd like a mighty potentate.

LI.

They fought with swords; twice Aberdour disarm'd
The hot-brain'd youth, and twice gave back his life:
Conduct so generous might well have charm'd.
But the boy piqued himself on love of strife,—
He must love something, if he hate his wife!
Disarm'd again, his sword in pieces flew;
Our knight now did what cut like keenest knife—
His bright unvengeful blade he from him threw,
Disdaining to chastise more than contempt would do.

LII.

The youth stood silent and subdued, with gaze
Half meant for homage fix'd upon his foe;
His pride he strangled, and in words of praise
Its requiem was heard; so solemn, low,
His accents were, 'twas more a funeral show:
Though there and then the youth did seem to be
Foregoing much, he little did forego:—
False pride he lost, but self-respect gain'd he,
And learn'd he then to think, and with his own eyes see.

LIII.

The mind Locke likens to an acorn—e'en
The undeveloped oak, which time unseals;
Descartes compares it, with more truth, I ween,
To a blank chart which observation fills;
Too often early prejudice distils
Its poison drops, and sullies the fair page;
With Aldobrandi's mind 't was so: it thrills
To find the people of a bygone age
Observe for half the world, and so the mind encage.

LIV.

Till Aldobrandi was convinced by facts,
He deem'd all English heretic and base—
Hereditary foes of truth, whose acts
Seem glorious only as they heap'd disgrace
On church antagonistic,—hated race.
Is there no prejudice, no counterblast
That blows from England? True, alas! our pace
In ire, invective, hate, is just as fast;
Though we did not start first, we strive to be not last.

LV.

A hostile influence prevails o'er plants—
Beside the vigorous the weak will fall:
A hostile influence supplies the wants
Of all things animate, or nearly all;
And it doth seem as alike natural
That man should war with man, and that should be
Evil as well as good: 'tis mystical
Whence evil comes, when Divine purity
All space pervades; mayhap 'tis from necessity.

LVI.

Out of creation evil issued,
For evil is but imperfection shown;
Things are imperfect because limited,
And limited creation is, we own.
The ills of flesh and pangs of mind are known,
But not so nature's workings when unfelt:
Though mighty little man of late has grown,—
When he would pierce the heavens, there to have dwelt
Like daring Icarus', his waxen pinions melt.

LVII.

His insufficiency and nothingness
Felt Aberdour, as sceptics all must feel;
He seem'd like one in forest frontierless,
Led by the chase and on-inciting zeal,
Who, lost, looks round and round, and then doth wheel
Into some path, whatever path it be,
On rushes he, heedless of thunder peal,
With stern and wild impetuosity:
Love claim'd his ardour once, now it was Italy!

LVIII.

And o'er the fate of this fair land, its past
And future, ponder'd he, till hope and fear
Became so blended that each phrase the last
Did seem to contradict, and doubting e'er
He moved nor distant friends nor tyrants near:
The fault was not so much his own as theirs
For whom he labour'd, who one day revere
The pomp that crushes them the next, their cares
Trusting kind Heaven to soothe, or any hand that dares,

LIX.

Besides their own;—thus wanting, in the first
And firmest law of nature, self-reliance,
Without which pigmies would be all accurst,
And divers races be stamp'd out by giants.
Sir Aberdour grew weary of compliance
With stern resolves such slaves to disenthral;
And losing much of his peculiar buoyance,
He bade adieu to Italy, where all
Seems specious mirth and mockery—a vast state ball.

1.

" Adieu, fair Italy! 'tis vain
To point to glory once thine own,
And hope remembrance of thy reign
Shall yet erect thy fallen throne.
Thy fertile soil and sunny sky
Attract, as a rich prize will do;
What fool cannot find sympathy
Whose wrongs are many, faults but few:
The slave that looks defiant not
Beneath the lash deserves his lot.

2.

" They say thy genial clime did haste
Man's freedom from barbarity;[14]
Like hot-house plant's, thy growth and waste,
Too forced to last, thy energy.
Are there no young and healthy germs
To grow apace and flower by-and-bye?
Thy youth, aurelia like, but forms
Nidus for an Ichneumon-fly:[15]
And tyrannies their growth attain
From nutrient bodies of the slain.

3.

" Oh, for the hour, the glorious hour,
Ere thou hadst, like the butcher-bird,[16]
Drawn others so within thy power,
That death did smite whene'er you stirr'd;
When, like the green-wing'd jacamar,[17]
Thou sangest sweetly all day long,
And people gather'd from afar
To view thy beauty, hear thy song;
In thy young happy spring time, when
Thy sons stood in the ranks of men:

4.

" When friendship's bail for life was life,
And honour's pledge ev'n death redeem'd,
When during peace, as midst the strife,
Italian heroes greatest seem'd;
Whilst stern simplicity prevail'd,
And ruled one universal mind,
And every thought and deed avail'd
To exalt their country, tame mankind;
Ere introduced was luxury,
Ere selfishness enslaved the free!"

NOTES TO CANTO I.

[1] "*If I am lonely, so was Richter too.*"

IT is Jean Paul Richter, I think, who is said to have complained that he was nearly thirty years of age before he met a woman whom he could really love.

[2] "*It seem'd as if Cotytto's festival.*"

THE festival of Cotytto (Goddess of all Debauchery) was celebrated, during the night, by the Athenians, Corinthians Thracians, &c

[3] "*I blush to say there were two English ladies there.*"

THE *bal masqué* is to morals what the ballot is to politics, both are inseparable from abuse, and are favoured by the ill-judging crowd. The same may be said of the Carnival abroad, which permits, as in Spain, such games among the lower orders as

Don Pelljo. Happily the *bal masqué* is not fashionable in England.

Not many years ago, a gentleman, well connected and highly educated, as the phrase is, brought an action for *crim. con.* against another, with the view of ultimately obtaining a divorce *e vinculo matrimonii*. It transpired during the proceedings that the defendant had a counter charge to bring against the plaintiff, and on close inquiry it was found that each had "wronged the other," and that the whole affair was one of mutual accommodation.

I cannot see how recent legislation has amended the law relating to divorce, as the matrimonial tie can still be severed by a simple fiat, and glaring evils are numerous as before.

[4] "*As dogs of old were treated in Peru*
During eclipses of the moon," *&c.*

"The Peruvian dogs," says Humboldt in his Cosmos, "had a peculiar part to play in eclipses of the moon;—they were beaten until the eclipse was over."

[5] "*One maiden could a low vile spot on earth*
Endear to Dante."

The city of Lucca, though infamous for its peculators, was endeared to Dante by its being the residence of the beautiful Gentucca.

[6] "*Most plants may bloom where the free sunshine plays,*
But some will flourish only in the shade."

In the tropics, lichens and mosses luxuriate only in shady places. Some of our indigenous plants thrive best in the shade.

[7] "*As scandal had been busy with her name,*
And science' representative too dull,
Who wrong affirm'd she was 'too loveable.'"

In London, and throughout the country generally, there were great rejoicings in honour of the supposed birth of a prince, heir to Queen Mary's throne. One of the preachers was actuated by such devoted loyalty, that, after describing the fair proportions of the infant prince, he invited his "dearly beloved brethren" to join with him in thanking Heaven for the favour vouchsafed. "But for all this great labour," says quaint old Holinshed, in his Chronicle, "for their young maister, long looked for, coming so surely into the world, in the end appeared neither young maister nor young maistress, that any man to this day can hear of." Mary was affected with dropsy, and luckily was married. Many a virtuous girl, similarly affected, has been exposed to undeserved obloquy and hurried to the grave, in consequence of physicians pronouncing too hastily-formed an opinion. The circumstances referred to in the text are in part connected with the name of a virtuous and accomplished lady, which must be familiar to many.

[8] "*Nine fair Barbagian girls.*"

BARBAGIA is a tract in Sardinia, notorious, in the time of Dante, for the immodesty of its females.

[9] "*Here comes the Marquis! Zounds!*
A sleek church-beadle!"

I HAVE heard it mentioned that an English nobleman appeared at a continental ball-room—not a *bal masqué*—in the distinguishing costume of a metropolitan church-beadle. He was sufficiently distinguished and was *not* shown out.

[10] "*He stood not there like men in party's yoke,*
Who bully China and succumb to France."

THESE lines were written in 1858, at the time the public were loud in their complaint against the Liberal Party for their conduct in relation to China and France.

[11] "*Like Raleigh's unsubdued warraws in trees.*"

SIR W. Raleigh saw the fins of Orua-rau-ates (warraws) high up in the trees.—*Discov. of Guiana*, 1596, p. 40. Humboldt says of this people, they owe the preservation of their moral and physical independence to the half submerged marshy soil (Delta of the Orinoco) over which they lightly tread, and *to their elevated dwellings in the trees.*

[12] " *They plunder, riot—not as would the Turk*
In a sack'd city!"

In 1783 there was a dreadful earthquake in Calabria, when the peasants, abandoning the farms, rushed into the towns, not to aid their countrymen, but to plunder. They behaved like fiends, evincing no sympathy for the wounded as they dashed along the streets and into the houses, and were known to have in many instances stripped the dying and dead of their clothes.—*Dolomie*, quoted by Lyell.

[13] " *Famed Tegghiaio Aldobrandi left a name*
Renown'd in war and great in politics."

A noble Florentine, though a great patriot and politician, and of renowned military talent, punished, in Dante's "Inferno," for his vices.

[14] " *They say thy genial clime did haste*
Man's freedom from barbarity."

Pliny contains an eulogium on the Hesperian sky, the genial mildness of which, according to the dogma of the older Pythagoreans, " early hastened the liberation of mankind from barbarism."

[15] " *Thy Youth, aurelia like, but forms*
Nidus for an Ichneumon-fly."

The Ichneumon-fly (*Pimpla persuasoria*) deposits its eggs in the bodies of other living insects, which it does by means of a sharp and strong abdominal tube or ovipositor. The eggs are hatched in a few days, and the young larvæ subsist on the juices of their victims.

[16] " *Ere thou hadst, like the butcher-bird.*"

This bird (*Lanius excubitor*, of Linnæus) is said to imitate the notes of the smaller singing birds in order to attract them to its haunts, and seize them the more readily.

[17] " *When, like the green-wing'd jacamar,*
Thou sangest sweetly all day long."

This splendid bird (*Galbula viridus*) is not unlike the kingfisher. It is of solitary habits, resorting to the densest part of the woods, and is said to have an agreeable note.

SIR ABERDOUR; OR, THE SCEPTIC.

Canto II.

I.

MID the enchanting scenes where whilom play'd
The Faerie Queene and all the elfin throng,
Where from each hillock, streamlet-bank, and glade,
The sounds of fairy music rush'd along;
In sweet Kilcolman, whence the glorious song
Of Spenser issued, where proud Raleigh trode,
Roams now a solitary man,—among
Those scenes his recollections found abode,—
And he anon did sigh and lisp the name of God.

II.

Each flower-clad spot, and tree, and grassy mound,
And hawthorn hedge, and gentle rivulet,—
Associates in his wanderings o'er that ground
With her he loved, whom he can ne'er forget,—
Painted afresh lost happiness, as yet
The only happiness he ever knew.
Things had not alter'd, but to him seem'd set
Their sun of beauty, for the smiles that threw
A radiance o'er his heart made radiant all there too.

III.

He mourn'd, and with him nature seem'd to mourn,
Without such aid as Alexander gave,
When cities of their battlements were shorn
To grieve for loved Hephæstion in the grave;[1]
The wind blew chill, in sadness seem'd to wave
The shrubs and trees, the warblers all were mute,
The forward little red-breasts seem'd less brave,
Sheep bleated sad, kine grazed without dispute,
And none but doleful airs came from the shepherd's flute.

IV.

He sat him down on a cold ledge of rock,
And gazed upon the ground, nor heeded he
The busy ants beneath, procuring stock,
He dwelt in his own world of reverie.
Uplifted he his head unconsciously,
A glorious sunset full before him glow'd;—
Soon he lapsed back into despondency,
That Nature everywhere such beauties show'd,
And none were near to share the blessings God
bestow'd.

V.

Who knows the storm-king in his mad career
Upon the yeasty ocean seems undone;
Who moves in battle, o'er a bloody bier,
Feels but an unit, helpless, if alone;
So with the sceptic on his airy throne,—
He, too, is brave, and spurns impending fate,
He, too, is pleased, when danger all is gone;
But storm or war for him can but abate
Its fury, he is ever lone and desolate.

VI.

'Twas now the hour of respite,—Maud was there,
Her image glanced from each remember'd spot,
He would have communed with his lady fair,
But she eluded him—had he forgot
He was an atheist, and she was not?
The veil that blinded him he tore aside,
He *would believe* and find a happier lot.—
Ah! he but dreamt! where is his beauteous bride?
Again is he alone on misery's surging tide.

VII.

He rose to leave that melancholy place,
A sunless world, though once his paradise;
And as he turn'd, he saw a woman's face—
A poor old woman's—and felt some surprise
That she regarded him with prying eyes.
The aged crone, one of that sisterhood
Who gather herbs at sunset and sunrise,
Portending evil, or affecting good,
Address'd our hero thus, as he there wondering stood:—

" Just such a youth, as fine and tall,
With bright blue eyes that smile on all,
My lady loved,—oh, how she loved!
And he, the wretch, inconstant proved!
She pined away, disconsolate,
Her love would never turn to hate:
I saw the angel as she left,
Of beauty, reason, all bereft!
Oh, had the wretch stood by her then,
He must have died, or loved again!
Now she is far beyond the sea,
And none is left so kind to me.
My gentle Sir, for her dear sake
If you will give me I will take;
And I will work a potent charm
To keep you, day and night, from harm.

" Why stare?—I'm no witch,
But a poor honest woman;
You folk who are rich
Have ways quite uncommon;

The rich and the poor
Alike enter God's door,
I question much whether
They both go together;
The rich have airs here,
And the poor will have there,
For the rich will be poor, and the poor will be rich.—
Ay, stare! I'm a witch, an old witch!"

VIII.

Such tidings, in so strange a way convey'd,—
Maud dying like a crush'd decaying flower,
Into whatever spot transferr'd to fade,—
Fill'd with astonishment poor Aberdour.
The hag unconsciously did wield a power,
Acknowledged by amazed looks, which she,
Like the bad genius of an evil hour,
Deem'd frowns, and changed her suppliant tone to be
A self-confounding thing, like all iniquity!

IX.

There was no caustic in her angry words,
But she had sore oppress'd him ere she tried;
Whence could she get the knowledge she affords?
It must be true;—and he had been belied!—
And Maud was ill, perhaps for him had died!
Man's love is not like woman's, 'tis a fire
Fann'd by strong winds, fast wasting in its pride;
In stillness, where no hurricanes conspire,
Glows woman's flame, a bonfire, or funereal pyre!

X.

The meanest, poorest, have a dignity,
As in the woods are true-born gentlemen,[2]—
Oft so capricious if it wounded be
Atonement inadmissible is; when
The hag felt anger'd she spoke boldly, then
Turn'd on her path, and nought the youth could say
Or give avail'd to make her speak again;
She had concluded her sweet roundelay,
And moved self satisfied to bow to no one's sway.

XI.

Oh! for a charm to work upon his frame,
And furnish him with Alpine eagle's wings,
That he might fly to Maud and bear all blame,
And listen whilst of peace and strife she sings;
What joys the one, what woes the other brings!
But love-sick youths are bound by common ties,
Just as great people are by vulgar things;
A rich old uncle orders, ere he dies,
His English nephew to find *Irish sympathies:*

XII.

This meant to travel through the land, and well
Judge for himself if all that's said be true;
If hapless Ireland be indeed a hell,
Or if from bigot minds it takes that hue;
Its people found he hospitable, few
There were, no doubt, as there are everywhere,
Half savages, who like a portion grew
Of their own rugged hills, but none were there
Who had not heard of God, as there in England were.[3]

XIII.

Unlike the country of the Samoyeds
Where darkness reigns, and all lies desolate,[4]
There shines the sun, and there are floweret beds,
Whilst Nature's efforts there to smile are great.
Ah! taunt it not with its impoverish'd state,
Ye who have made of it a battle ground
For hostile creeds and races! How can hate
Beget affection? Bondsmen are not found
So vile to kiss the hands that dash them to the ground.

XIV.

The Pole, Hungarian, Irishman, and Jew,
Are members all of one great family,
Each may maintain his own peculiar view,
And nought disturb the others' harmony.
I would not have my brother coerce me,
Why should I him oppress, or, like the sons
Of Œdipus, should we desire to be[5]
So bitter in our hatred that each shuns
The other living, dead apart must lie our bones?

XV.

The world is cruel, and so let it be;
But it might feel for griefs it causes not;
There was a tyrant once—he of Pheræ[6]—
Who slew ten thousand with unpitying thought;
Yet wept, as if with tender feelings fraught,
To hear an actor spout a woman's grief.
If persons have no modesty, they ought,
We think, affect a little; to be brief,
Rash statements are received as dogmas of belief.

XVI.

As credit tourists, I would just as soon
Believe old Symmes, who swore the earth is hollow,[7]
Or Bishop Wilkins, who was in the moon[8]
And fondly hoped that many more would follow.
We have our oracles of great Apollo,
As had the ancients, but they differ thus:—
Unask'd our's ope their mouths, and say one swallow
Will make a summer—nought ambiguous,—
They boldly lie and make the world ridiculous.

XVII.

The land was traversed, people high and low
Commingled with, the sympathies were found;—
His uncle died, and Aberdour was now
So rich, that hosts of cares sprung up around,
Like fungi in o'er-fertile spots of ground:
Men claim'd acquaintance whom he never saw,
Ladies he slew that never felt a wound;
His friends grown sages, each advised him;—Pshaw!
What men should hate the world like those it holds
in awe?

XVIII.

I will not here describe the scenes gone through
In comedy, farce, pantomime, where play'd
Dames, dowagers, misses, fools, and wise men too,—
A few, in fact, of every style and grade;
Suffice it that our hero soon was made
Buoyant, like ship that hath no ballast in,
Sport for the waves whilst on the waves he stay'd,
Now running 'fore the wind, and now is seen
Toss'd by the lazy billows, sullen with chagrin.

XIX.

Ambition had lain dormant, just as lies
In rattlesnake's closed mouth the poison fang;[9]
As when a victim nears the reptile's eyes,
The jaws divide, and while apart they hang,
Erected is the poison tube;—so sprang
Ambition when approach'd such wealth! No more
Thought he of weeping Maud, no longer sang
His doleful ditty,—such affairs were o'er;
And he now felt a warmth he never knew before.

XX.

Here shall we leave him in the vain pursuit
Of something through ambition's devious ways,
Where every turn endangers one's repute,
And censure oft is met, but seldom praise;
It may be sweet on glittering prize to gaze,
Obtain it,—think you it will satisfy?
Upstarts another with still brighter rays,
And so on, objects cross ambition's eye
Like the illusions of a sick man's phantasy.

XXI.

We are in Malta, on the Pietà,
'Tis early evening and Calesses pass,
Mark if in one you see a fond mamma
Gazing upon a pale-cheek'd daughter's face,
Whence beauty smiled ere grief usurp'd its place.
Whom have we here?—two ancient maids; pass on,
Old ladies, ye may once have grieved, but trace
Of sorrow there is none, yet ye look lone,
Like thorny rose-bush when the summer time is gone.

XXII.

Here comes a gaudy equipage, it rolls
Lightly, as if 'twas airy Joy it bore;—
A courtly Englishman, whose frown controls,
No doubt he is some mighty governor:
On, Sir; the vasty ocean licks the shore,
How foul soe'er it be, that limits it;
So with thy power, a greater power before;
That god-like air then is not requisite,
Unless it be assumed to awe for want of wit.

XXIII.

Who now?—a loving wife and her sweet lord;
The lord seems sour, he knows himself not why,
He will not deign to smile or speak a word,
Not through—oh, no—not through vulgarity!
None could be more polite were strangers by,
No lady, save his wife, but would receive
Attention, none but she have cause to sigh
O'er a demeanour meant great things to achieve:
At home all beasts are gentle, only men aggrieve!

XXIV.

Comes rattling one, a perfumed son of Mars,
With hairy face but open countenance,
Beside him sits one of old England's tars,
Radiant with mirth, if not with elegance;
I've seen this pair move in the mazy dance,
I've seen them on the battle field; the foe,
Like beauty, hath a charm, and they advance
'Mid danger as 'mid pleasure, as they go
They smile, for Albion calls and they will die or do.

XXV.

Lo! comes a carriage like a mourning car,
So slow doth seem its pace, this must be she;
Her fragile form rude motion cannot bear,
Without, within, she seeks tranquillity:
Prepare the blotted picture now to see
Of grace and beauty, once all loveliness;
Oh, what a cruel Goth that man must be
Who could, for idle fame, neglect like this
The loveliest of the lady-birds of Paradise!

XXVI.

How death-like pale that face, how shrunken too;
How dull and fix'd those eyes that once did swim
In luminous moisture; why has fled health's hue,
Faded its fulness, and its light grown dim?
To feed the image in her mind of him!—
An image she had worshipp'd till had grown
Its circling rays to form earth's diadem:
And nought was left her now save this, and none
Could comfort, for a breaking heart is always lone.

XXVII.

Ye youth, who love to lounge at Beauty's Fair,
And move triumphant through the glittering throng;
Ye maids, who strive to look the brightest there,
Receiving homage as ye strut along;
Pause, ere a dying, killing glance is flung:
For oft into such selfish crowds may stray
Some artless girl, or simple child of song,
Whose hearts, o'er-strange to all such amorous play,
Once wounded bleed, and bleeding, hasten to decay.

XXVIII.

Return she must, the evening is too fine,
Her fading form shrinks back within the shade,
So like those ships she sees in quarantine
Doth she regard herself, she seems afraid
Her sorrows to the world may be convey'd.
The poor, distracted mother, what can she
To stay that drooping flower; her arm is made
To twine around—oh, if assuaged could be
Such grief, it would be by that mother's sympathy!

XXIX.

" Maud, mourn not thus, 'tis weakness to despair,
Time hath a remedy for every ill;
Birds spoil their plumage in the schoolboy's snare,
Trees lose their foliage at the whirlwind's will,
Grass trodden down is, and the purling rill
Is lappèd up by parching dog-days, seeds
On ocean cast are vegetative still:
A few short years roll by, time supersedes
Alike the ill results of chance and men's misdeeds.

XXX.

" This world is one of contrasts, light and shade,—
Deformity dwells next to beauty, pain
With pleasure mingles, and we see array'd
Evil with good; calm seek we here in vain,
In Heaven alone tranquillity doth reign:
Yet, with a little wisdom, things may be
So govern'd here that we ought not complain,
The good corrects the bad, just as we see
Concords with discords intermix'd make harmony!

XXXI.

" What is this Aberdour, my Maud, to thee?
A rich and gifted but a faithless one;
His wealth is dross, his talent vanity,
Can wealth and talent serve to fill the throne
Which love descends from? Thou art less alone
As a poor maiden in a wilderness,
Than as a bride to whom neglect is shown,—
For then the world doth witness thy distress,
And tongues there be as many to revile as bless.

XXXII.

" He is as godless as he is untrue,
'Tis said he is a sceptic; now, mark well,
Those unbelievers do as bigots do,—
Alike intolerant they sentinel
The bigots Heaven, the unbelievers Hell;—
They hate where they love not, and they but love
Those that keep watch with them. Oh, who can tell
But that this demon's influence might move,—
No, let me die—both die, ere thou apostate prove!"

XXXIII.

She ceased, and kiss'd her daughter's burning brow,
A moment since that brow was icy cold,
What wrought the quick transition?—rudely now
The chord was struck her lover touch'd of old.
His was a daring spirit she was told,—
At length they knew what she so long had known;
Therein her glory lay, to have controll'd
That haughty mind,—therein she was undone:
He own'd her influence once, might it not linger on.

XXXIV.

It was this hope that kept her still on earth,
It is this hope which makes her sensitive
When aught is said detracting from his worth;
She long'd to die and yet she strove to live.
She cannot well forget, can she forgive?
Go ask the miser who has lost his hoard
If he who will restore it can aggrieve:
She knew no joy save what he could afford,
No grief save the sad echo of his parting word.

XXXV.

She lived for him, her mother lived for her,
That mother felt like Rhea when in Crete
She close conceal'd her infant Jupiter,—
The tyrant lover knew not their retreat,
He must not know, he never shall repeat
The false assurance that he loves her child;
But should he come she'll spurn him from her feet;
Maud's peerless form he had already spoil'd,
Her mind belongs to Heaven,—that shall not be defiled.

XXXVI.

Ah! doting mother, thou art vain and proud,
'Tis true thy Maud should be a prince's bride;
But Aberdour is not one of a crowd,—
Though he has err'd, and has high Heaven defied,
He is not false as you too oft implied.
You know him not, thy Maud alone but knows:
How comes it you and she do not confide?
You hear her sobs, you see her painful throes;
If Aberdour were false you would not witness those.

XXXVII.

Maud crowns her lover with love's brightest rays,
You picture him the vilest of the vile,
When you are loudest in the youth's dispraise
Can you not mark her unbelieving smile:
'Tis not the way to make her heart recoil
By painting him as he, she knows, is not;
He is unlike your "Quintessence of guile:"
He has indeed one error, 'tis a blot
That time will yet efface, when all will be forgot.

XXXVIII.

You are a mother and you feel as one,
Divest yourself of such solicitude
As appertains to your maternal throne,
And think with Maud—just as a sister would,
Talk as you think, and vary with her mood;
Be as the guide that knows each winding path,
The goal is fix'd, make you the journey good:
See with her eyes,—be blinded not by wrath,
And you will have the uncomplaining heart she hath!

XXXIX.

If you repose in her, she will in you,
And you may learn how vain has been your care;
Though Aberdour and Maud have long been two,
They both are yet within a magic snare,
And each can see the other linger there;
Ere you had stepp'd upon the waters he—
That lover—sniff'd this Island's perfumed air:
Descend into the earth, Maud he will see,
Mount in the atmosphere, there Aberdour will be.

XL.

When lovers sleep their souls take rapid flight,
And in aerial vesture clad[10] descend
Amid the darkness in a streak of light,
To hover o'er the loved one,—there attend
Till they with morn's effulgence softly blend:
What converse sweet hold lovers in their dreams!
Their glorious fancies new enjoyment lend
Till all around with sunny gladness beams,
And earth to them is really what it only seems!

XLI.

Such lovers once were ours, such dreams had they,
Till plunged estrangement like a fiend between
And marr'd the prospect of love's holiday;
But though a shadow dwells upon the scene,
Still Aberdour is king and Maud is queen.
They often look upon their clouded sky
And think how lovely once that sky had been,
And wonder if this darkness will go by,—
If heaven again will smile and look serenity.

XLII.

The carriage stopp'd, they had at length arrived
Before a villa, their secluded home;
Whose is that form, now through an arbour dived?
The form of her the first to see them come,—
The loved of all, half idolised of some,—
Maud's favourite sister, gentle Rosalie:
Just what a sun-dial is without a gnome
Without that guiding sister Maud would be,
None understand her, can interpret her but she.

XLIII.

Here now she comes like radiant morn to chase
Night's dew-drops from her sister's pensive brow,
Mark how Maud brightens as she feels th' embrace;
Thanks, Rosalie, she seems much better now.
Descend, dear Maud, thy Rosalie knows how
Thy tottering frame should be supported. See,
Her step is firm, her form but seems to bow;
Fresh streams of life flow in from Rosalie;
Ah, sigh, fond mother, sigh! well may you envious be!

XLIV.

There grew an Indian fig-tree near, beneath
Whose leafy canopy they loved to sit[11]
Such times as Maud her secrets chose to breathe:
No spot for lover's sighs could be more fit,—
A thymy bank with wild flowers strew'd—now lit
With sunshine, lay before, around were trees
Carob and orange through whose branches flit
The airy choristers, and midst of these
The gentlest zephyr blew—the softest perfumed breeze.

XLV.

Thither the sisters moved, and Maud sat down
Upon a cushion Rosalie had brought,—
A silken cushion, stuff'd with eider-down,
Which Rosalie had made, whereon she wrought
Maud's name, and "Maud's" 'to call it all had
taught,—
And by her side upon the grassy ground
Sat Rosalie. Maud's heart was full; she caught
Her sister for support, and weeping found
The solace tears afford when bleeds anew a wound.

XLVI.

Maud's hand was grasping Rosalie's, and hers
Was pressing Maud's, and over both did run
Two mingling currents—sent as messengers
From heaving hearts that felt as if but one.
Said Rosalie "What can mamma have done!"—
Too well she knew the language of those eyes,
Though tears were absent, speaking sighs were
none;
When she beheld her mother and Maud rise
She felt awake at once her sleeping sympathies.

XLVII.

'Twas she led Maud—Maud not unwilling was,—
To this their haunt of secrecy, that here
She might be told what did and did not pass,
And counsel give whilst shedding tear for tear.
"What can mamma have done! Alas! I fear
She has again been wronging Aberdour:
'Tis only, Maud, because thou art so dear;
Mamma so loves you—ay, had she the power
To Heaven with you she'd fly, and leave us all, this hour!"

XLVIII.

Maud tried to speak, and tears gush'd forth anew;
She tried to shut those floodgates of her heart,
Again essay'd to speak, but nought would do;
She made a movement as if to depart,—
Upsprung her Rosalie, and with fond art
So gently lifted her she did not fall;
Slowly they moved about that wild flowers' mart;
They gazed upon the flowers, and seem'd in all
Like weeping girls at an Adonis Festival![12]

XLIX.

How slowly seconds sometimes will advance:
At length, when Rosalie had waited long,
Maud language found with fitful utterance;
She startled Rosalie with some *fresh wrong*,
That form'd a sad new burden to her song.
Who told their mother Aberdour did "doubt?"
Not Maud—not Rosalie.—They'll hear her gong
With fury struck, now she has found this out:
Must they yield Aberdour, she'll put them all to rout?

L.

They dry their tears, they have no time to weep,
An enemy is in their stronghold—Ha!
Maud thought she heard a rustling sound from sweep
Of silken dress!—that terrible mamma
Seem'd everywhere, in all she heard or saw!
She look'd at Rosalie to find her gaze
Reflected back; they trembled both with awe,
And fear'd Heaven's anger would pursue their ways,
For never will they join in Aberdour's dispraise.

LI.

Poor blighted Maud! poor suffering Rosalie!
They found no solace, they could look for none;
Oppress'd by care, bow'd down with misery,
They knew not where to turn; and one by one
The minutes pass'd, till a whole hour had gone.
Still linger'd they, to grief abandon'd quite;
At length their privacy was trespass'd on—
A message from their mother! In affright
The timid girls look'd round—could they have heard aright?

LII.

O human love, that claims despotic power,
Too oft repaying homage with a smile;
O love of sister, ruling for the hour,
Whose sun-lit glory seldom doth beguile;
O love divine, Religion, which doth aisle
Within thy bosom all that's good for all,
Regard thy votaries, aid them the while
They hearken to their angry mother's call,
And in that awe-inspiring presence stand or fall.

LIII.

Their feet are on the threshold,—ne'er before
Did they so tremble: Rosalie goes first;
Another effort, and they reach her door,—
Oh! that 'twere dark! the daylight seems accurst!
They enter with a rush to face the worst,
Maud sinks upon a sofa, by her side
Is Rosalie: they strive as if to burst
The bonds of life, to fly away and hide;—
Ye loves we have invoked, oh! stay this sweeping tide!

LIV.

Their mother started from a reverie,
And softly now did she approach the pair,
She kiss'd Maud's cheek, the cheek of Rosalie,
Her tone is mild, most humble is her air,—
She seems the culprit, they the judges there.
Their eyes have met,—the mother's fill with tears,
She kisses Maud again, and breathes a prayer
That she might be as Rosalie appears,
A sister confidante, alike in all but years!

LV.

Maud weeps, and too weeps Rosalie, whilst each
Clings to a mother now no longer fear'd;
They fail'd to speak, they had no power of speech
To thank and bless, instead those tears appear'd—
The tears of grateful love. How they revered
That kind good mother! She too did employ
Her thoughts of gratitude; and each felt cheer'd:
They were at peace with all, nought could annoy,
And angels smiled from heaven upon their new-found joy!

NOTES TO CANTO II.

[1] "*When cities of their battlements were shorn*
To grieve for loved Hephæstion in the grave."

PLUTARCH relates that Alexander, upon the death of Hephæstion, caused not only the manes of the horses and mules to be shorn, but had the battlements of the walls taken down, that the very cities might seem to mourn, by losing their ornaments."—*Life of Pelopidas.*

Hephæstion loved Alexander, and Craterus the king. How different the feelings inspired by affection to the person and affection to the throne.

[2] "*The meanest, poorest have a dignity*
As in the woods are true-born gentlemen."

CAPTAIN, now Rear-Admiral, the Hon. Sir Henry Keppel, in his "Expedition to Borneo," mentions having met a Dyak (who had scarcely ever seen a European before) whose manners

were so easy and polite, that he regarded him as "the most perfect gentleman he had ever met."

The very humblest of the Chinese are essentially polite and courteous, without being indebted to their vaunted civilization.

[3] "*Its people found he hospitable . . .*
. . . . . but none were there
Who had not heard of God, as there in England were."

I DESIRE to institute no invidious comparison between the social positions occupied by the respective lower orders of the English and Irish, but simply state a fact which Englishmen are apt to forget, when they indulge in the reckless abuse of their Irish fellow-subjects. Be the religion of the Irish right or wrong, it reaches all and teaches the love of God. How many are there to be found in the mining districts of England, and in London itself, to whom the attributes of the Deity, if mentioned, would be as incomprehensible as a Greek chorus, and to whom even the name of the Sovereign is as unknown as that of the Shah of Persia, or the Tycoon of Japan.

[4] "*Unlike the country of the Samoyeds,*
Where darkness reigns and lies desolate."

THE district beyond the river Mezen, to the east of Archangel, extending to the Straits of Wezgetz far within the polar circle, is described as the "Region of darkness."

[5] " *Or like the sons*
Of Œdipus should we desire to be."

It is fabled that Eteocles and Polynices, sons of Œdipus and Jocasta, hated each other whilst living, and that, after death, the fire which consumed their bodies on the same funereal pile refused to unite, and divided itself into two distinct flames.

[6] " *There was a tyrant once—he of Pheræ.*"

Alexander the Pheræan, consecrated the spear with which he slew his uncle, and having crowned it with garlands offered sacrifice to it, as to a god. He pitilessly put to death a great number of his people, yet, upon seeing a tragedian act the *Troades* of Euripides, he hastily left the theatre, that he might not be seen to weep at the sufferings of Hecuba and Andromache.—Plutarch's *Life of Pelopidas.*

[7] " *As credit tourists—I would just as soon*
Believe old Symmes, who swore the earth is hollow."

" Near the North Pole, at 82° lat." says Humboldt, " whence the polar light emanates, was an enormous opening through which a descent might be made into the hollow sphere, and Sir H. Davy and myself were even publicly and frequently invited by Captain Symmes to enter upon this subterranean expedition."

[8] " *Or Bishop Wilkins who was in the moon.*"

This gentleman, one of the early fellows of the Royal Society, maintained that the moon was a habitable world, and actually proposed schemes for flying thither. I wonder if he issued return tickets?

[9] " *Ambition had lain dormant, just as lies*
In rattlesnake's closed mouth the poison fang."

I suppose most persons are acquainted with the peculiarity of construction in the poison fangs of reptiles. They are hollow, and communicate with the poison-gland which is situated at the upper part of the head; when the reptile is at rest and the mouth closed, they lie horizontally, but when a victim is near and the mouth opens to seize its prey, the fangs become erected by the very effort required to disclose them, and by this self-same effort the poison-sac is pressed and the poison made to flow. The orifice in the fang is not at the point but near it, in order that the resistance offered by the opposing substance might not impede the emission of the fluid.

[10] " *When lovers sleep their souls take rapid flight*
And in aerial vesture clad descend."

The notion respecting the " aerial vesture " of the soul was

first entertained by Origen. It was widely diffused for some centuries, and had not become altogether exploded in the time of Dante, for he alludes to it in the " Purgatorio."

[11] " *There grew an Indian fig-tree near, beneath*
Whose leafy canopy they loved to sit."

The Indian fig-tree sometimes forms a leafy canopy, similar to a tent, supported by various pillars.

[12] " *They gazed upon the flowers, and seem'd in all*
Like weeping girls at an Adonis Festival."

The festivals of Adonis were held in the Adonis gardens (Κῆποι Ἀδώνιδος) which were intended to represent the garden wherein Aphrodite met Adonis — the symbol of the quickly fading bloom of youth. They were seasons of lamentation for women.

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SIR ABERDOUR; OR, THE SCEPTIC.

SIR ABERDOUR;

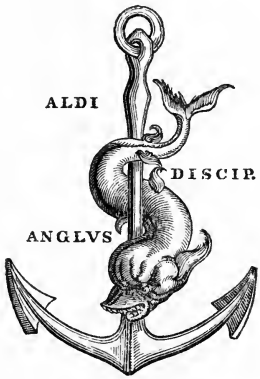
OR, THE SCEPTIC.

A ROMAUNT.

BY

WALTER P. J. PURCELL, Esq.
OF THE INNER TEMPLE.

CANTOS III. AND IV.



LONDON:
BASIL MONTAGU PICKERING,
196, PICCADILLY.
1863.

SIR ABERDOUR; OR THE SCEPTIC.

Canto III.

I.

APPROACH the hallow'd site whereon once stood
The hall of ancient royalty,[1] where now,
In modern gorgeousness array'd, is view'd
The superstructure Barry raised; we bow
Abash'd before the memories that here grow
Of glories past, which time doth e'er renew,—
Of mighty conflicts stamp'd on England's brow;
How poor and insignificant seem you
Upon this sacred spot where Albion's genius grew!

II.

Here sainted Edward died; here Harold sped;[2]
Here came triumphant William from the field,
Where Saxon might and chivalry lay dead;
Here Magna Charta once again was seal'd;[3]
Here steep'd in blood was England's snow-white
shield
When martyr'd Charles, to expiate no crime
Of his, but of his age, was forced to yield,
And heard pronounced his doom,—he stood sublime
That monarch there, and threw a glory o'er the time!

III.

What pageantries of state,—the fleeting shows
Of human grandeur, were enacted here;
What great events did councils here disclose,—
A conqueror check'd upon his mad career,
A nation saved, a distant race brought near.
O'ershadow'd by the mighty dead this spot,
Endear'd to genius, should to all be dear;
Here is the cradle of the law; forgot
Be records of the past where liberty is not!

IV.

Thrice lambent flames triumphant rose high o'er
The parching fabrics of art's early stage,[4]
Look, the devouring element no more
Can level with the plain,—it may engage,
But modern art, inviting, scorns its rage;
Consummate skill hath form'd, yet structure frail,
Erostratus defying but not age,
The outward shell is mould'ring fast,—the veil
Time rends, and by-and-by will gilded fanes assail.

V.

The House has met,—a grand debate to-night,
Great is the throng of members, seated are
The chiefs of party, longing for *their* fight,
While scintillating moves some lesser star;
On sweep the clashing pioneers of war
With love and hatred fraught, great patriots all,
Forgetting oft their voices reach afar,
Talk they as though at some low festival,
And rancour is begot where words of peace should fall.

VI.

Majestic stride the chiefs,—some men aver
The senate now boasts no grand intellect;
Illustrious Pitt, the heaven-born minister,
Great iterating Fox whom few respect,
Burke, child of fancy, Sheridan, of neglect,
Windham and Canning, all are shadow'd forth,—
True, it may be with more or less defect,
But lack of glitter is supplied by worth;
The statesmen of to-day are honest from their birth.

VII.

Majestic stride the chiefs; not rude are they,
But combat like the gentle knights of song;
Full many a thrust in earnest or in play
They give, but never in defence of wrong,
Truth is their weapon and their foe the strong.
Will England trust to other men than such
To guide her destinies? no, let the throng
Proclaim their heroes, nature here is much,—
Eagles 'tis known will starve ere carrion they will touch.

VIII.

As in the days of chivalry some knight
Unknown joins in the tournament, in quest
Of glory, so in this encounter bright
Appear'd a young aspirant, in whose breast
Lived the exciting demon of unrest.
His was a splendid effort; high the meed
There offer'd, in admiring looks confest;
And when applause had died away, in need
Seem'd he of something more,—a gaze whereon to feed,

IX.

A loving gaze, for though around him beam'd
A sunny gladness, 'twas as sunshine plays
Upon the waters, cold beneath all seem'd.
What hollow mockery these sounds of praise!
And this is glory! these the halcyon days
Sir Aberdour imagined, whence should spring
The solace—fond allusion!—that repays
For blighted love! Ah, fool'd imagining!
Contentment is not found where soars Ambition's wing.

X.

Fastidious swains and maidens are at first,
Till cools their ardour and they human grow,
And fondly now are men and women nursed
Who were so hideous a few years ago;
The founts of happiness keep closing so
The spring, of late pass'd by, is sought again;
'Tis so with Aberdour, no peace will flow
From source political, strives he in vain;—
And back to Maud he flies, disdaining not her reign.

XI.

But on the way his vanity assumes
Immense proportions, and he is without
That species of true knowledge which illumes
The darkest path, dispelling every doubt.
Well may his fancy calmer reason flout;
Is he repentant? no, he is subdued;
Though no believer, can he seem devout?—
A slave to form?—a mimer of the brood,
Which desecrates the earth and marks his solitude?

XII.

No, he can seem no other than he is,
And he can be no other than he seems,
Contemner of all creeds and systems, his
Belief a doubt—a sweeping doubt. The schemes
Of men are all religions, and the dreams
Of Science' maddest sons all systems are;
That prince was wise whose fiat disesteems
Alike the self-denying minister,
And juggling priest of Fo—himself his only care.[5]

XIII.

Thus thought Sir Aberdour, and he delay'd,
And, dallying, subsided soon his hope;
In awe of Maud and of himself afraid,
This child of impulse better loved to mope
Throughout the world, far better than to cope
With rough realities. And now once more
Upon his view a scene began to ope—
A scene of quiet on a distant shore,
Unlike the one he quits, where clamour men for pow'r.

XIV.

Quick fitted-out was a swift barque, and soon
Upon the heaving ocean, free to roam,
Untrammell'd moved Philosophy's buffoon,—
Though Learning's favourite, so had he become;
He sought a home, abandon'd of his home,
Among basaltic mountains, where is shed
Throughout the year a fragrant vernal bloom,—
Where Nature smiles and Nature looks as dead,[6]
And Homer's Atlas rears its venerable head.[7]

XV.

Time pass'd, and one by one familiar stars
Were blotted from the sky, whilst others shone
Instead with planetary light as Mars,—
Not sparkling like the stars we look upon.[8]
Full twenty tedious days had come and gone
When Teneriffe appear'd, the same proud peak
Three thousand years ago to Tyrian known,
Abruptly rising now as then,—a speck
On ocean doth remain, whilst man becomes a wreck!

XVI.

" Hail, Teneriffe, and ' Islands of the Blest,'
Region of darkness and of light! thy fame
Begun with learning,[9] and was more caress'd
Till Fable left thee nothing save thy name.
I feel as felt the Nursian in his shame,
Who sigh'd for peace within thy tranquil shade,[10]
And though less guilty have not less to blame
A world, where cursed is he who once has stray'd
From off the beaten paths his ancestors have made.

XVII.

" I come not as the Lusitanian came,
To subjugate, convert, and then destroy;[11]
I have no mission, am without an aim,
And have no other wish than to employ
Thoughts irrepressible, which yield no joy.
I am alone and like a castaway
Upon the ocean, but know no decoy
Wherewith to lure my courage for a day;
Yet will I struggle on and fall no gentle prey.

XVIII.

" What is man's origin? Look at the scale
Of being, graduated, and avow
Lamarck did promulgate no idle tale,—
That once proud man was what the ape is now.[12]
'Tis human policy declareth how
Man hath an origin that is not proved;
Innate ideas are impress'd to show
A God exists, but they are soon removed
When they affirm an ape can love and be beloved.[13]

XIX.

" In the grand 'struggle for existence' man
Obeys, like other animals, 'tis said,
The law, that with the dawn of life began,
Of 'natural selection;'[14] have not fled
Before the savage, as have vanishèd
Before the Roman, races grown too old?
Cave of Ataruipe, give up thy dead;
Those palm-leaf shrouds a story doth unfold,[15]
That will be told again as oft before 'twas told.

XX.

" To sleep is to have no desire, in this
Are all men equal and alike content;
To die is to be happy, such is bliss,
And not what silly rhapsodists invent;
Oblivion of the past is what is meant
By a contented state; enjoyment means
A blinding light but for an instant sent,—
Obscuring, as obscure the solar beams
Where all around disgusts and most unsightly seems.

XXI.

" What I can comprehend I can believe,—
No more,[16] else reason is of no avail;
The mind doth of material things conceive,
Herein its limit lies; material
Are the ideas it abstracts and frail—
And only such—from matter: I must, then,
If I am to make use of reason, fail
To know that God—a spirit, beyond our ken,—
Not Nature, but the perfect God of faulty men.

XXII.

" There is an unity in the design
Of this vast universe;[17] it proves no more
Than that exists a Being half-divine,
And capable of using just such pow'r.
Men of adverse opinions o'er and o'er
Have shown themselves agreeable to agree,
That from the works of Nature learnèd lore
Cannot make manifest the Deity:—
Stand forth, Socinus, Ellis, Hutchinson, Magee.[18]

XXIII.

" If not from Nature, whence obtain the proof
That an eternal Being doth exist—
Supreme, incomprehensible, aloof
From matter yet pervading it? Persist
The churchmen that He is, and still the gist
Of their discourse is that He is; they show
Reveal'd religion, and would fain enlist
Our sympathies; but I will not allow
For proof what needs a proof—reveal'd religions do;—

XXIV.

" I say religions, for we've more than one.
The Moslem, Christian, Buddhist, Brahmin,— all,
Of equal credit, preach the truth or none;
They contradict each other, a cabal
Each seems, their teachings all equivocal.
And 'tis to one of these poor hood-wink'd man
Must trust to prove the supernatural.
Why not believe in Budh? I once began
To think 'twas not so bad to be Mohammedan!

XXV.

" I've seen the 'Holy Foot' on 'Adam's Peak,'
Where Adam fell, like Vulcan, hurl'd by Jove,—
The Tomb of Adam, or, as others speak,
Of Buddha,[19] votaries of each there move,
And Buddha's Adam's teeth prove and disprove;
And o'er 'the pearl grounds' in this region fair,
I've seen the Christian cast his eyes above,
And—profanation!—breathe a charm or pray'r[20]
To scare away the sharks that will assemble there.

XXVI.

" Let me look elsewhere, it is still the same;
A hundred altars ever rise in view,
A thousand voices e'er aloud proclaim
' Ours is the great Elohi, we the few
Loved by this God of gods, amen, sadoo.'[21]
Credulity of man, alike below,
Above plain reason; 'tis the same to you
Before a godhead's majesty to go,
Or Christian's aspen-tree,[22]—like Buddhist's sacred bo."[23]

XXVII.

So coursed his thoughts when Aberdour beheld
His resting-place, and his philosophy—
He deem'd himself now of the gray-hair'd eld—
Was Eleatic or about to be;[24]
Time, space, and change were mere illusions; he
Felt that he was, but need not be. As none
Can comprehend, much less the mystery
Of life or death explain, ought he alone
Exclusive knowledge claim, where nothing can be shown?

XXVIII.

Again he ask'd himself, ought he alone
Exclusive knowledge claim? and once again
He answer'd, No; and feeling less undone
Than threaten'd van'ty ceased he to complain.
He closed external Nature's broad domain
And dwelt upon the Pow'r which men adore—
Almighty influence, felt, unseen, to reign
For e'er as It had reign'd,—no less, no more.
'Twas with this weight of thought he touch'd the
welcome shore.

XXIX.

Upon sweet Orotava's vine-clad slopes,
Beyond Matanza and Vittoria,—[25] names
Expressive of the cruel Spaniard's hopes,—
Pitch'd Aberdour his camp. No thought inflames
Beside that crater whose sad presence tames,
As there it yawns, all drear and desolate,
Amidst a country which precedence claims
Of earth's most favour'd spots. To dissipate
A sceptic's doubts what place could be more adequate!

XXX.

He strays 'mong orange and banana groves,
O'er arborescent heaths and vine-clad hills;
Or towards the Rambleta and Piton moves,[26]
And so his duty for the day fulfils.
Night comes and brings reflection, and the ills
So long train-bearers, one by one retire;
Dwells he with the Invisible. He stills
No longer conscience, and at length desire
To know the truth, health, quiet, Heav'n's good grace, inspire.

XXXI.

Oh, what a heap of prejudice and pride,
Snake-like, and slow thrown off, around him lay,
As he communing sat one evening tide,
Ere yet three fleeting months had pass'd away!
St. Julian had come with him—not to stay,
But as he loved to travel and had found
A worthy patron whom he liked to obey;
And having long enough delay'd was bound
To England now;—he had this evening come around

XXXII.

To bid adieu, to press the friendly hand
That lifted him when he had fall'n, and leave
Behind ten thousand blessings in that land
Of not inglorious exile. This same eve
St. John his fiery tribute did receive;[27]
From the volcano stream'd a hundred lights,
And the glad shepherds unrestrain'd did give
Their voices to loud merriment.—No sights
Like those of harmless joy to soften Timonites.

XXXIII.

Our hero and the Count stood in extremes,—
One thought too much, the other not at all,
Dwelt Aberdour in Fancy's land of dreams,
St. Julian lived on earth, too practical;
Both disregarded man, the Count did fall
Beneath, high soar'd Sir Aberdour above;
So kings and beggars meet beyond the pale
Of our society, alike they move
In disregard of rule, unsway'd by fear or love.

XXXIV.

St. Julian was a Romanist in name,
Professing little and believing nought,
Because he knew some others were the same
He cared not one iota to be taught;
Moreover, 'twas a fashion he had caught,
And it, no doubt, might add to his repute.—
They sat together musing, each seem'd fraught
With feeling; but they could not long stay mute
Whilst blaze the fires and shouts of joy their ears salute.

XXXV.

Spoke Aberdour, at first in playful mood:—
" How happy are those shepherds! it would seem
'Tis true philosophy, least understood,
To live content: no matter how those dream,
What we deem error is the truth to them.
Why should we disabuse them, if unrest
Result from our endeavours? ' Truth esteem,'
Is your reply. But who has got the test
For truth, unalterable truth, the truth truth confess'd?

XXXVI.

" Tis easy to mark error but not truth;
The sun is absent, so a clown can tell,
But can the clown say where? I know, forsooth,
That I know nothing,—am an infidel,
Because I nothing know and would dispel
The cloud of error close surrounding me.
Let those good people keep their heaven and hell,
The images improve not injure; we,
While they are pleased, ought not destroy their
phantasy.

XXXVII.

" And after all, may not with truth accord
Their main belief? They think the Influence,
Essence, or God—whatever be the word,—
Which form'd all things must be *Omnipotence*,
And which all things preserves, *Benevolence*.
Omnipotent Benevolence I love,
Though unintelligible to my sense;
And if to you I nothing else can prove,
This can I. Ask yourself; 'tis with your nature wove.

XXXVIII.

"Here now breaks in a light! St. Julian, list,
I feel as though I had been blind from birth,
And suddenly now rolls away the mist,
Leaving to me the gaze of the full earth.
If He—this God be spirit, what is the worth
Of argument, for we deduce therefrom
Our immaterial souls, Heav'n, and so forth.
Give ear,—I cannot send you back to Rome,
But I can make grave doubts cease to be troublesome."

XXXIX.

St. Julian listen'd, having nought to say,
Whilst Aberdour in his impassion'd tone
Continued:—"Pantheism doth claim the day,
Asserting that the world and God are one
By unity of substance.[28] How is shown
In union of conditions opposite
What is of God, what of the world alone,—
God represents the perfect, infinite,
The world the finite and imperfect? I submit

XL.

" They must insist on Divine plenitude[29]
When vanishes the phantom of the world,
And God remains alone; or must be view'd
The world as a reality, when hurl'd
Is God from his high throne, reduced and twirl'd
To an abstraction. They would comprehend
All things, ev'n Divine nature have unfurl'd,
And so know nothing; we do not pretend
To search the Inscrutable, so more know in the end.

XLI.

" That God exists and is a spirit I feel,
For I can recognize Infinity.[30]
Infinity of time and space reveal
A subject, cause, that Infinite must be.[31]
Infinity implies perfection: He,
This Being all perfection, cannot dwell
In senseless matter; how can it be free
To dwell in Him? Let those who will rebel
I must believe, and scorn to be an infidel.

XLII.

" There is a God who immaterial is;
If immaterial why should there exist
Nought else than bodies? None can answer this.
All bodies have extent, so must consist
The substance Thought of the materialist.
Extent is indispensable to thought?
Not so, God *is*. True, no anatomist
Has ever found a soul; but who has sought
And found a grief or joy? or a reflection caught?

XLIII.

" As matter is inert, and cannot move
Except by impulse from extraneous cause,
That feeling which incites to hate or love,
Is not of matter, if beyond its laws.
Death is but dissolution; where withdraws
The soul? As it is indivisible
It is indissoluble, and, the gauze
Of matter once removed, it hastes to dwell
Beyond that mystic bourne, of which not man can tell.

XLIV.

" He who created can, if He so will,
Annihilate; but why should cease to be,
Ere yet its destiny it could fulfil,
My soul, when from its prison-house set free?
I feel within that which assures to me
A life hereafter; whence arises this?
Am I deceived by a just Deity?
Am I deluded by self-artifice?
God guides and not misleads, and I shall cross th' abyss.

XLV.

" This carnal shroud, corruptible and gross,
Which claims such care, and we so fondly tend,
Is but a cloudy mass embracing close
The sun of life which through its rays doth send;
'Tis an encumbrance that the soul would rend;
It much receives, and nothing can bestow.
What do the senses? Simply they suspend
The soul's high powers. And what doth language do?
The same in less degree, though lava-like it flow.

XLVI.

" The eyes are but our prison-windows, closed
Were Milton's, still it was for him to view
The awful splendours that o'er Heaven reposed,
The beauties mild which on the poor earth grew.
Beethoven had no ears to hear, yet who
Could sounds of harmony arrange so well?
Oh, what could not the soul of genius do,
If 'twere encased in a less earthly shell
Than this debasing form, wherein 'tis doom'd to dwell!

XLVII.

" And what doth language but elaborate
And thought transmit: not staring eyes do see,
Nor ears do hear, and souls communicate
Through language as like medium. Could there be
Intelligence 'twixt souls from matter free?
Pray, what is genius but a half-freed soul,
Which in few words displays its brilliancy:
The soul of common man attempts control,
But language fails, and shows not genius but a fool.

XLVIII.

" Poor abject body, form'd of empty clay,
Yield thy pretensions, short will be thy reign;
Bright spirit that actuates, thy tyrant's sway
Oppresses sore, but thou must not complain;
Bear with thy pilgrimage, thy portion pain
May be,—in friendship false, in love unbless'd,
In blasted hopes, in ills that will remain,
Or worst, in despot's rule, made manifest;
There is awaiting thee a blissful time of rest.

XLIX.

" The God of majesty, who call'd thee forth
From nothing, sits on His high judgment-seat;
Thy sojourn He regards; if thou hast worth,
When death doth summon, He reward will mete;
More bitter life, life after death more sweet!
St. Julian, I may henceforth live in peace,—
If peace be here 'tis from the Paraclete;
My murmurs all must from this moment cease.
I am a poor weak man, may God my strength increase!"

L.

The barque that sail'd from Santa Cruz that eve
With Count St. Julian, from the palm-clad shore
Received a youth, whom few could well believe
Was proudest of proud men the day before—
So sadden'd, humbled now was Aberdour:
He fear'd to gaze upon the Heavens, the light
Therefrom confounded; so a man will low'r
His head when coming from the dark of night
Into a wondrous room, where lustres blaze most
bright!

NOTES TO CANTO III.

[1] "*Approach the hallow'd spot whereon once stood*
The hall of ancient royalty."

THE royal palace of the monarchs of England, from Edward the Confessor to Queen Elizabeth, stood upon the site now occupied by New Westminster Palace.

[2] "*Here sainted Edward died; here Harold sped.*"

EDWARD the Confessor died here, January 14th, 1066, and on the Easter succeeding King Harold came hither from York.

[3] "*Here Magna Charta once again was seal'd.*"

MAGNA Charta and the Charta de Foresta were confirmed "in a great council" here by Henry III.

[4] "*Thrice lambent flames triumphant rose high o'er*
The parching fabrics of art's early stage."

The palace was nearly destroyed by fire in 1298, and again in 1512; the third fire occurred October 16th, 1834.

[5] "*That prince was wise whose fiat disesteems*
Alike the self-denying minister,
And juggling priest of Fo—himself his only care."

The Emperor Too-Kanang (of China) addressed a proclamation to his subjects in which he reviewed all the different forms of religion known in the empire, including Christianity, and, deeming them all false, advised his people to despise them altogether.

[6] "*Where Nature smiles, and Nature looks as dead.*"

The whole island of Teneriffe, says Humboldt, may be considered as a forest of laurels, arbutus, and pines, of which the external margin only has been cleared, whilst the central part consists of rocky and sterile soil. There is something melancholy in the sight of a crater in the midst of a fertile and highly cultivated country.

[7] "*And Homer's Atlas rears its venerable head.*"

The Peak of Teneriffe is now admitted by all to be the Atlas of Homer and Hesiod, whilst the Atlas of the Roman and Greek geographers is in Northern Africa.

[8] "*Time pass'd, and one by one familiar stars*
Were blotted from the sky, whilst others shone
Instead with planetary light as Mars,—
Not sparkling like the stars we look upon."

As we approach the equator the stars familiar to us disappear, and are replaced by others, which shine with a soft and planetary effulgence, giving to the sublimity of a tropical night much of its charm. As the island of Teneriffe is in 28° N. lat. I cannot venture to view the southern cross and the glorious aspect of the southern heavens as manifested by the constellation of the ship, the nebulæ which rival in lustre the Milky Way, and the phosphorescent clouds of Magellan. I have crossed the equator four times, and have been amply repaid by a survey of the southern sky.

[9] "*Hail, Teneriffe, and 'Islands of the Blest,'*
Region of darkness and of light! thy fame
Begun with learning," *&c.*

Through the colonies which the Phœnicians sent into Greece, particularly through that under Cadmus, the information respecting Mount Atlas (Peak of Teneriffe) and the "Fortunate Islands," or "Islands of the Blest" (the Canaries), was received and spread through Greece. The songs of the bards propagated the tradition, and embellished it till the region became as mystical as Hades.

[10] "*I feel as felt the Nursian in his shame,*
Who sigh'd for peace within thy tranquil shade."

Sertorius, harassed by Sylla's troops under Annius, crossed the Straits of Gadès (Cadiz) and landed near the mouth of the river Bœtis (Guadalquiver). He met there mariners arrived from the Atlantic islands (Canaries) whose description of the beauties of those isles induced in him the desire to seek tranquillity therein, at a distance from war and tyranny, &c." Plutarch *in Vita.*—Appian *de Civ.*

[11] "*I come not as the Lusitanian came,*
To subjugate, convert, and then destroy."

The Canaries were formerly inhabited by the Guanches, famed for their tall stature. In the fifteenth century the Portuguese and Spaniards visited the islands in pursuit of their slave trade, and the unfortunate inhabitants, subjugated and converted, were eventually destroyed. The race is extinct altogether.

[12] "*What is man's origin? Look at the scale*
Of being, graduated, and avow
Lamarck did promulgate no idle tale,—
That once proud man was what the ape is now."

Lamarck's theory of "Progressive Development" is founded, I believe, on Tiedeman's discovery of the changes that take place in the fœtal brain of mammals, which represent successively forms analagous to the brains of the fish, reptile, and bird.

Lamarck, if I remember rightly (I have not thought of this subject for years, and at present I have no access to books), ascribes man's origin to the evolution of a monad out of inert matter.

[13] "*Innate ideas are impress'd to show*
A God exists, but they are soon removed
When they affirm an ape can love and be beloved."

Sir Aberdour is evidently no believer in the immutability of species, but he surely mistakes the vulgar notion about the ape tribe for an innate idea. What will not prejudice lead to! It may be that he had in recollection Father Gili's story, as mentioned by Baron Humboldt, and had given his reverence credit for sincerity, the more readily that the purport of the tale went to establish more than the good father had intended. The story is this, "gravely related by Father Gili:"—"A lady of San Carlos passed several years with a large anthropomorphous monkey of South America (hairy man of the woods), and left him only because she and the children that she bore him were tired of living far from the church and the sacraments."

[14] "*In the grand 'struggle for existence' man*
Obeys, like other animals, 'tis said,
The law, that with the dawn of life began,
Of 'natural selection.'"

Darwin's Theory of Descent with Modification has many strenuous supporters. There certainly is "grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed

by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved." "When I view all beings, not as special creations, but as lineal descendants of some few beings which lived long before the first bed of the Silurian system was deposited, they seem to me to become ennobled." (*Origin of Species.*)

The diffusion of this theory, so humiliating to man, must tend to the development and manifestation of kindly feelings towards all forms of animal life.

[15] "*Cave of Ataruipe, give up thy dead.*"

Near the southern entrance of the Raudal of Atures, on the right bank of the Orinoco, is the Cave of Ataruipe, the vault or cemetery of an extinct nation. Over 600 skeletons, in baskets woven from the stalks of palm-leaves, were found by Humboldt, who states, "it is supposed the Atures, being pressed upon by cannibal Caribs, withdrew to the Rocks of the Cataracts, in which the tribe finally perished." (*Aspects of Nature.*)

[16] "*What I comprehend I can believe,—*
No more."

Bayle's dictum, "comprehension is the measure of faith," seems to be the motto of Philosophy.

[17] " *There is an unity in the design*
Of this vast universe."

This argument of Paley has been over-estimated. It can prove no more than is stated.

[18] " *Stand forth, Socinus, Ellis, Hutchinson, Magee.*"

Faustus Socinus, founder of modern Unitarianism, and the Hutchinsonians, friends of Revelation, denied that the existence of God could be proved from the phenomena of the universe. Dr. Ellis (author of a treatise on this subject published in 1743), and Dr. Magee, Archbishop of Dublin, both stout Episcopalians, professed the same opinion.

[19] " *I've seen the* '*Holy Foot*' *on* '*Adam's Peak*'
Where Adam fell, like Vulcan, hurl'd by Jove,—
The Tomb of Adam, or, as others speak,
Of Buddha," *&c.*

The " Holy Footstep" on Adam's Peak, in Ceylon, is a depression on the summit of a rock, *not very like a footstep.* According to Sale's Koran, when Adam was cast down from Heaven he fell in Ceylon or Serendib; hence the Mahommedans reverence and resort to the depression on Adam's Peak, as to the footmark of Adam. The Buddhists consider the depression to be the

footprint made by Buddha as he departed from the earth, whilst a third class (the Brahmins) regard it as the veritable footmark of Siva. The followers of three religions throng there. The Mahommedans maintain that the body of Adam reposes in the mountain, whilst the Buddhists assert it is Buddha's body that lies there. Some of Adam's or Buddha's hair and teeth were shown in Marco Polo's time.

[20] " *I've seen the Christian cast his eyes above,*
And—profanation !—breathe a charm or pray'r."

The chief shark-charmer at the pearl fishery of Ceylon, in 1857, was a devout Roman Catholic!

[21] " *Loved by this God of gods, amen, sadoo.*"

The Buddhists who visit the " Holy Footstep" mutter the word " sadoo" (equivalent to amen), whilst they make their genuflections and offer flowers.

[22] " *Or Christian's aspen-tree.*"

The Syrian Christians deduce from the fact of the Holy Cross having been formed of aspen-wood, that the tree is always trembling with anguish and horror.

[23] " *Like Buddhist's sacred bo.*"

The sacred bo-tree of the Cingalese *(ficus religiosa)* is sacred to Buddha, who is supposed to have often slept under it. On one particular evening Buddha witnessed, or rather the tree did, a fear-exciting scene which has caused its leaves to tremble ever since.

[24] " *His philosophy . . .*
Was Eleatic, or about to be."

Xenophanes of Elea, in the sixth century before the Christian era, founded a school of philosophy, which had for its object the limitation of thought to ideas of God, or the Being, as it is in itself. In this system God and the universe were confounded together; the argument being, " either God is all or nothing; if anything exists beyond Him it is wanting to His perfection."

[25] " *Beyond Matanza and Vittoria.*"

Two beautiful hamlets near Orotava. These names, slaughter and victory, occur in almost every Spanish colony, and are sufficiently expressive of past deeds.

[26] " *Or towards the Rambleta and Piton moves.*"

La Rambleta is the name of the plain immediately surrounding the Sugarloaf, or the Piton. At the top of the Piton is the edge of the crater, from which a descent may be made to the bottom of the Caldera.

[27] " *St. John his fiery tribute did receive.*"

" The volcano exhibits a fine spectacle, when of an evening the shepherds, in conformity to ancient custom, light the fires of St. John. Shouts of joy are heard from afar," &c. I am indebted to Humboldt for much information concerning Teneriffe. I regret that I was unable to land there when passing close to it in H. M. S. " Shannon," in 1857.

[28] " *Asserting that the world and God are one*
By unity of substance."

Pantheism, which is stealthily advancing in England, comprises much which may be summed up in these few words, " the world is in God, by confusion of substance." This proposition naturally suggests, if the world be in God, evil must be in the nature of God, for the world contains evil. This is blasphemy! But then the Pantheists say, if the world be an existence *separated* from God we can conceive this existence to be added to God, and thus have an idea of a being more complete, and consequently more perfect than perfection, which is absurd; the existence of plurality is not to be explained.

I will give the reply to this objection in the words of Jules Simon:—" The co-existence of unity and plurality, or, if it must be so expressed, of perfection and imperfection, is inexplicable; but is it more so in the hypothesis of creation than in that of Pantheism? Now, according to Pantheists, the world is a portion of God, according to us it is exterior to, and separated from, God. Unity and plurality co-exist; is it less

difficult to comprehend that plurality forms a portion of unity, than that plurality is exterior to, and separated from, unity? or, in other terms, is it less difficult to comprehend that imperfection should form a part of perfection, than that imperfection should exist exterior to, and separated from, perfection?

"Unity co-exists with plurality, but not, according to the Pantheists, without producing it. It produces it in all cases; there, beyond itself; and here, within its proper substance. If it is asserted that one of these operations is more easy and intelligible than the other, the assertion amounts to nothing, for we know not how anything is done, whether we consider our own works or those of God. The action of producing within and beyond myself is equally familiar. I produce within myself a thought; I produce beyond myself a movement; these two problems are equally incomprehensible to me, whatever the presumptuous philosophy of Pantheists may say to the contrary."—*Nat. Religion.*

[29] "*They must insist on Divine plenitude.*"

This argument is Jules Simon's.—*Nat. Religion.*

[30] "*That God exists and is a spirit I feel,*
For I can recognize Infinity."

"The most beautiful, the most exalted, the soundest and best proof of the existence of God, that which supposes the least, is

the natural idea we have of the infinite. For it is certain the human mind recognises infinity, though it cannot comprehend it."—MALEBRANCHE, *Research into Truth*, Book iii. pt. ii. c. 6.

[31] "*Infinity of time and space reveal*
A subject, cause, that Infinite must be."

"INFINITE time and infinite space are not substances, they are therefore attributes; consequently there must exist an infinite cause and subject to which infinite time and space belong." DR. SAM. CLARKE, *Treatise on the Existence of God.*

SIR ABERDOUR; OR, THE SCEPTIC.

Canto IV.

I.

THERE is an insect of the pool,
At once unclean and beautiful,[1]
Which on the water's surface plays
When calm is day and bright its rays,
But let a shadow or a breath
Be seen or felt it dives beneath,
And, wallowing in the filthy slime,
Destroys its beauty for the time.
How like is man! as bright a thing
Whilst fluttering with a joyous wing,
But when he leaves the realm of air
And seeks the caverns of the earth,

The vice and darkness that lie there
Mar the bright lustre of his birth.
The fairy shrimp doth rise again,
Doth wash its slimy filth away,
And so may man if he will deign
To ponder well on life, and pray
For grace to govern and obey.

II.

So felt the sceptic now reclaim'd,
The feelings which of late inflamed
Had pass'd away, like lightning clouds
By thunder rent and tempest driven,
And 'stead of darkness that enshrouds
Beams now the tranquil light of Heaven;
And o'er the watery waste he moves,
Like any joyous swain who loves;
The dancing spray the vessel throws
From off her proudly heaving bows,
The deep blue ocean's frothing tide,
That murmuring sweeps the vessel's side,
The sea-bird's cry, the sighing breeze,
All show or breathe love's witcheries.

Oh! what a glorious time for love,
With nought beneath, around, above,
But the blue sea or azure sky
To make or mar a reverie!—
When, in a storm, is closely press'd
The loved one's image to the breast,
From thunder's roar and lightning's glare,
To be protected fondly there:
When, in a calm, the heavens descend
And, mirror'd, with the ocean blend,
And forth unnumber'd suns do shine,
Encircling close a form divine;—
The picture in such glory set
Who once has seen can ne'er forget!

III.

On, on he coursed, a fortnight pass'd,
And still another week at last;
Before him now in beauteous haze
Love's sweet enchanting fountain plays;
He thinks of Maud, of only her,
The world seems dwarf'd to this one spot,

So to the thirsty mariner,
Exhausted, fainting, dying of drought,
Seem those fresh-water springs at sea,
Restoring life and liberty.[2]

IV.

He leap'd on shore,—he knows his way,
Though here he never trod before;
He reach'd his destination,—day
Black midnight seems! th' unyielding door
And the closed windows there proclaim
Abandon'd hope, o'erwhelming shame!

* * * * *

Oh! blame him not! his own fierce thoughts
Well pictured his the worst of lots;
Too like he seem'd to that vile thing
Which spreads destruction all around,
And kills itself with its own sting
When nothing else is left to wound![3]
Too like seem'd the diminish'd earth
To the parch'd steppe, when is forth
The desolating drought,[4] that throws

The veil of death half over those,
Who struggling breathe, devoid of sense,
Within its maddening influence;
Where the wild horses frantic roam,
  Tossing their heads high in the air,
As though some moisten'd breeze could come
  And waft the wretches from despair;
Where that illusive lake doth dwell,—
Mirage or thirst of the gazelle,[5]—
Which but unfolds to aggravate
Evils already far too great,
Revealing to the greedy sight
Fountains of pure unmix'd delight,
For ever unapproachable,
Like Heaven to eyes of those in Hell;
Where life—no phase of it is worse—
Seems not a blessing but a curse,
And the parch'd soil awide doth gape
As if inviting an escape,
By plunging through Death's awkward snare,
From all the horrors crowding there!

V.

Could Maud be dead and he not know?
Could she be lost to him? ev'n so;
If dead or lost 'tis only he
  Who is to blame, and none will share
The crushing load of misery
  Which he henceforth is doom'd to bear.
He felt her loss, alas! too late;
He cursed his own unhappy fate,
And mourn'd for her as lovers mourn,
  Who melt with love's subliming fire—
  Not kindled by earth's low desire—
When from its holy shrine is torn,
By some unseemly dire mischance
Or desecrating circumstance,
The idol that no stranger may—
  When to the stranger's care transferr'd—
Worship with half such zeal as they,
  Who had so blindly minister'd.
How selfish is this holiest feeling,
  Though 'tis the true Promethean fire
That man from Heaven is ever stealing,
  It smoulders but cannot expire;

Though oft it varies 'tis the same,
As flame whilst flickering still is flame;
Now like a little twinkling star
It shines, and now more brilliant far,
Like the great sun, it floods with light
  Those blessed souls that seem all good,
As though flung from th' empyrean height—
  Sparkles of Heaven's beatitude—
To show how sweet the yoke may be
We bear on to eternity;
As much of Earth as 'tis of Heaven,
It seems not merely lent but given
To be our safeguard in distress,
A beacon in this wilderness,
Which heavenward points, and lights the path—
Where mingling oft with love is wrath,
Just as we see in certain weather
Sunshine and rain both out together.
As exhalations will arise
From the foul earth to cloud the skies,
So sordid thoughts will dim this feeling,
Though glimpses of it e'er revealing!

VI.

His thoughts pursued, and like the gnu
When hunted in the drear karoo[6]
He turn'd at bay with fury wild,
Though a few moments since so mild:
Here was no sunshine, here no flowers,
Here dwelt no love in fragrant bowers,
No smiling faces beam'd around,
No blest contentment here was found;
Oh! why did Heaven deceive him so!
Did Heaven but raise him up to throw
Him headlong from a pinnacle
Into the very depths of Hell!
Poor youth! he still is human, still
He sway'd is by his tyrant will;
There is a something which he wants,
And for this something still he pants;
But half repentant, half forgiven,
He made a hollow truce with Heaven,
And charges now to Heaven alone
The evil that is all his own.

VII.

How wise is Heaven, how ignorant
Is man, who scarce knows what to want;
Left to himself he hates or loves,
  Sway'd by some idle circumstance,
And as each puppet-master moves
  He smiles or weeps, will howl or dance.
How weak are we, oh! say how weak,
  All you who have a favourite sin;
  But ask yourselves and look within.
Why are we haughty and not meek?
We can do nothing but resolve,
  And what is resolution more
Than that in fancy we revolve,—
  A mere desire without the pow'r
To claim to-morrow what to-day
We fondly, ardently portray?

VIII.

When his fierce passion spent its force
  And disappointment turn'd to pain,

Sir Aberdour grew cool, of course,
Till freshening passion urged again;
And like a forest beast encaged,
Whom wayward urchins fret and tease,
He idly chafed, he idly raged,
And grew indifferent by degrees.
The more he thought the more he felt
What dire conflicting passions dwelt
Within his breast, which nought allays
But the great God his mind obeys.
And he, at length, was touch'd no less
With pity for his own distress
Than with a holy, reverent awe
For the High Majesty of Heaven,
The golden letters in whose law
Are, *Mercy—all may be forgiven.*
There is no god but God alone,
There is no glory on the earth
That emanates not from His throne,
Where every excellence had birth!

IX.

It happen'd whilst he lay rebuked
And chasten'd by his grief, he look'd
Into a packet just received
From Teneriffe,—again he lived!
There was a letter which had stray'd,
And which the joyful news convey'd
That Maud was neither lost nor dead.
Just like a spotless sunbeam flung
Crush'd flowers and rankling weeds among,
The pure, angelic Maud had flown—
Sweet messenger from Pity's throne—
To where the haughty Muscovite
Had arm'd him for aggressive fight;
Where now the noble, young, and gay,
With many a vile and worthless name—
Since writ upon the scroll of fame—
One reeking mass of carnage lay.
The gentlest of the gentle band
That sallied from this tearful land,
Conveying to the wounded brave
The sympathies such angels have,

Was Maud; no dying hero there,
Son, father, brother, friend, or lover,
Who did not own her fostering care;
And some there were would fain discover
In her a mother, sister, daughter,
For who but such, amidst that slaughter,
Could o'er their couches lean and weep,
Caress their wounds and lull to sleep?

x.

Thither went Aberdour in haste,
At least to view if not to taste
The luxury that freemen find
In battling for oppress'd mankind;
To be near Maud, each wish of hers
Anticipating as she stirs,—
Her every movement shaking balm,
Her every smile a holy calm
Diffusing round, when groaning men
In gazing on her heavenly face
Forget their helplessness, their pain,
And fancy that some mystic place

Where angel-forms are floating round,
Where angel voices soft resound,
Where sin is not, where wrong's forgiven,—
A sort of ante-room to Heaven!

XI.

He stands upon the gory spot
Where England, France, Italia fought
Beneath one banner, in defence
Of sacred Freedom's influence.
The whizzing shot, the bursting shell,
Each had its fascinating spell,
To strike was but to curse or bless,
One martyr more, one tyrant less!
Subdued he stands; how slight the cause
Which forth such bloody havoc draws!
If man from man, for small offence,
Exact such punishment, learn hence
How dread the chastisement should be
That Heaven awards to you and me;
How slight the sin of man 'gainst man,
How vast is man's offence 'gainst Heaven,

Great God! vile man! we hardly can
  Forgive, yet we would be forgiven!
To Heaven he lifted up his eyes,
And, sorrowing for the past, his sighs
Ascended like the vapour's breath,
Which rising leaves all bright beneath.
'Twas at this moment, when he seem'd
Most fit for Heaven, a rifle gleam'd,
And ere the flash had vanish'd, home
The fire-sent messenger had come.

He saw no more till his glazed eye
  Was open'd by a rapturous touch,
When instantly a piercing cry
  Broke on his ear, oh! 'twas too much!
He there beheld, though dim his vision,
His long-lost Maud; what bliss Elysian
To feel her touch, to feel her breath,
E'en though such rapture closed in death!

NOTES TO CANTO IV.

[1] "*There is an insect of the pool,*
At once unclean and beautiful."

THE Fairy Shrimp (*chirocephalous diaphanous* of naturalists) is a small crustacean of elegant form and of silvery transparency, found occasionally in fresh-water pools. In fine weather it moves gracefully on the surface of the water, balancing itself by means of its branchial feet; but on the least disturbance it disappears and *plunges into the mud* at the bottom.

[2] "*Seem those fresh-water springs at sea,*
Restoring life and liberty."

HUMBOLDT says, "On the southern coast of Cuba, south-west of the port of Batabano, in the Gulph of Xagua, a few miles from the coast, springs of fresh water gush from the bed of the ocean (probably under the influence of hydrostatic pressure) and rise

in the midst of the salt water. Trading vessels sometimes visit these springs and take in a supply of fresh water."—*Aspects of Nature.*

[3] " *Too like he seem'd to that vile thing*
Which spreads destruction all around,
And kills itself with its own sting
When nothing else is left to wound."

I HAVE read somewhere that the scorpion has the destructive and suicidal propensities here attributed.

[4] " *Too like seem'd the diminish'd earth*
To the parch'd steppe, when is forth
The desolating drought."

" IN the South American Steppe, during the season of drought, the indurated soil cracks asunder, as if from the shock of an earthquake, the horizon draws nearer, and the steppe seems to contract.—The mirage but increases the misery of the thirsty wanderer. The wild horses and cattle roam about, the cattle lowing dismally, the horses stretching out their long necks and sniffing the wind, if happily a moister current of air may betray the neighbourhood of a not wholly dried-up pool."—*Aspects of Nature.*

[5] " *Where that illusive lake doth dwell,—*
Mirage or thirst of the gazelle."

THE mirage is called in Sanscrit " the thirst of the gazelle."

6 "*Like the gnu*
When hunted in the drear karoo."

The gnu (*Boselaphus gnu*) is a species of antelope found in the karoo of South Africa. It flies at the approach of the hunter, but when wounded often turns upon its pursuer.

Finis.

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